

## These Ghostly Archives 3

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*Archives do start conversations, make connections across time, and deserve universal recognition because of their uniqueness and enduring value.* (Brinati 3)

Historically, the primary means to an archive and its holdings is an in-person visit. Over the last two and half years, we have travelled to the BBC Written Archives Centre in Reading, England, the British Library in London, as well as to Smith College and Indiana University, which are sites of the two biggest archives of Sylvia Plath material, to highlight the thrill of the archival hunt. In the process, we have made archival discoveries that still seem somewhat improbable given the amount of attention and research given to Plath over the last few decades.

Shortly after we published "These Ghostly Archives, Redux" in *Plath Profiles* 3, the idea for this paper took shape as several "new" archival finds presented themselves.<sup>1</sup> "New" finds is an awkward phrase both to the archivist and the researcher, especially in collections that have been housed and cataloged for years. Archivists know their collections through processing and experience. The materials are located either through the older card catalog systems or more recently through online catalogs and finding aids. The latter may be accessed from almost anywhere using the Internet, and as a result archival collections take on a new life when combined with powerful search "engines" such as Google, which can "chuff" browsers, far and wide, to disparate sections of the virtual world in a matter of seconds. In this sense, archives take on another layer of ghostliness, as they exist in that curious virtual space that somehow manages to be both there and not there at the same time.

In the absence of digital representations of Plath's papers, in which original documents are scanned at a high resolution and presented via a web site, photocopies, scans, in-person handling must serve to satisfy our archival demands. Initially, the goal of our project this time was to handle and relate our archival finds purely via distance requests: by using Google, online catalogs, and finding aids for materials and then requesting photocopies or digital surrogates.

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<sup>1</sup> See "These Ghostly Archives, Redux" at [http://www.iun.edu/~nwadmin/plath/vol3/Crowther\\_Steinberg.pdf](http://www.iun.edu/~nwadmin/plath/vol3/Crowther_Steinberg.pdf). This paper followed "These Ghostly Archives" from *Plath Profiles* 2 ([http://www.iun.edu/~nwadmin/plath/vol2/Crowther\\_Steinberg.pdf](http://www.iun.edu/~nwadmin/plath/vol2/Crowther_Steinberg.pdf)).



This was not entirely possible for a number of reasons, which include: 1) as much as archives attempt to standardize procedures, individual repository policies vary greatly and do not always allow a collection to be accessed in this manner; 2) not everything is available online; and 3) staying away from libraries and archives is a lot more difficult than we imagined. As we have tried to convey, it is the "stuff" of the archive that has both a transformative effect on the viewed material and on the person doing the viewing. Photocopies and other formats of surrogates lack the immediacy of holding the physical item; and through no fault of those performing cataloging duties, descriptions can fail to convey exactly the content of the item described. If we take the following two examples from "These Ghostly Archives, Redux," we see this played out to suit the point.

In the Alvarez papers, the British Library catalog gives the following descriptions for two of its holdings: "'Landscape of childhood', transcript of a radio broadcast for the B.B.C. Home Service; n.d. *Typewritten*" and "'New poems'; n.d. Typewritten, with brief commentaries" (bl.uk). In both cases, these documents mean something to the Plath reader. The first being a near verbatim word reordering of "Ocean 1212-W," Plath's commissioned script which begins, "My childhood landscape was not land but the end of land" (*Johnny Panic* 123). The second catalog entry describes the introductions to a group of eight poems reproduced as an appendix in *Ariel: The Restored Edition* (2004). Obtaining photocopies is difficult since the policy of the British Library is that the researcher must obtain permission of the copyright holder. In this instance, it made sense for Gail to visit the archive. As we learned from her visit, the typescript of "Landscape of a Childhood" contains original Plath text; text that was ultimately cut by her editors from the final published and broadcast version and never subsequently reinstated in the *Johnny Panic* version of the story reproduced years later. In addition, the B.B.C. script of "New Poems" Plath prepared on December 14, 1962, actually was comprised of twelve poems; and the British Library copy includes four additional authorial statements about her poems. These were previously unknown (or unacknowledged) to Plath scholars and remain mostly unpublished.<sup>2</sup>

And so this call to the archive combines both visits made via the Internet and in person. We will present a never before published photograph of Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes, taken in New York City in June of 1958, which is held at Indiana University. We will also show two

<sup>2</sup> See "These Ghostly Archives, Redux," pages and 233-234, 237-238, and 242-243. In his "'That Alchemical Power': The Literary Relationship of A. Alvarez and Sylvia Plath" (*The Cambridge Quarterly* 39:3, September 2010, 217-236), William Wooten reprints Plath's introduction to "Letter in November" on page 235.



photographs of Court Green and its property from the early 1970s, held at the University of Maryland, College Park. These images capture the actual "strangle of branches" of Plath's poem "Elm," which as a result of Dutch Elm disease are no longer standing (Plath, *Collected Poems* 193). These trees, which had such a profound influence on Plath's poetic vision, and occur repeatedly in her later poems, are seen here for the first time in more than a generation.

However, even though these "successes" are evidence of fruitful archival research, not every inquiry made has such an outcome. Such is the case with the Heinemann archives, now housed at the corporate archives of Random House Group in England. Gail returned to the British Library to review the Plath related materials in the Hughes-Baskin papers and the recently opened collection of Hughes material purchased in 2009, both with mixed success. As we have in the past, we weave our archival experiences together, creating a unique, time-bending narrative of discovery through archival collaboration.

PKS: Familiar enough with the Plath Mss. holdings at the Lilly Library at Indiana University, Bloomington, I visit their website to see if anything else might be held by them about which I did not know. Their "Collections" webpage has a search box and I type in "Sylvia Plath" to see what the returns are.<sup>3</sup> I page through the results, pausing a few times to read the collection descriptions of the Sanazaro Mss. and the Wagner-Martin Mss.<sup>4</sup> But it is the Oscar Williams Mss. that grabs my attention.<sup>5</sup>

Containing correspondence, notebooks, poetry, and photographs by Williams, the collection also holds manuscript materials by other writers, including Plath. In browsing through the rest of the of the Williams materials, I navigate to the list of photographs in Series VIII. It lists there are five photographs of Sylvia Plath.<sup>6</sup> I wrote to the Lilly Library to ask which poems are present and if they could describe the photographs. The next day I received an email reporting that the poems are: "Full Fathom Five," "Sculptor," "Black Rook in Rainy Weather," "On The Difficulty of Conjuring Up a Dryad," "Sow," "Departure of the Ghost," and "November Graveyard, Haworth." Of the photographs, the archivist lets me know that he found only four

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/collections.shtml>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/lilly/mss/html/sanazaro.html> and <http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/lilly/mss/html/wagmart.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/lilly/mss/html/williamsoscar.html>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/lilly/mss/subfile/williamsophotos.html>



images: one of Plath reclining in a lawn chair, one of Ted Hughes also reclining in a lawn chair, one of the both of them standing with a skyline in the background, and one of Plath with Oscar Williams. He lets me know that scans can be made; I place an official order and write to Gail.

GC: Oscar Williams (1900-1964) was an American poet who had initially made contact with Plath and Hughes by mailing them a recording of his late wife, Gene Derwood, reading her poetry.<sup>7</sup> He was also editor of a revised edition of *The Pocket Book of Modern Verse*, (1958) in which he included three poems by Ted Hughes. Plath first mentions Williams in her journals on January 21, 1958, in which she muses on having never met him and the power of his dead wife's poetry. Writing about Derwood (in a way many of us now write about Plath herself), she states about the recording: "So blown ghost she comes to our tea, more substantial than many inarticulate mortals. That is strange: the deadness of a stranger who is somehow never dead – the knife of death unfelt...." (*Journals* 315). Williams then gets periodical mentions in Plath's journals, but what interested Peter and myself was her statement on April 30, 1958 that she had received "a card from Oscar Williams inviting us to a cocktail party in New York on the impossible last day of my classes" (*Journals* 385). This would place the party in May – or rather more accurately, unless there was a last minute change in Plath's teaching timetable - May 22. For whatever reason, it seems likely that the cocktail party was moved, for both William's photographs and Plath's journal and letters all report a cocktail party taking place in New York in June of 1958.

Peter and I became interested in placing this New York visit in context. Sometimes, when researching another's life, there is the temptation to treat each incident as somehow isolated, because the life there is laid out, fixed in time. We can dip in and extract moments, occasions, in an artificial way, too easily dragging them out of time and context. None of us live our lives in such a fragmented, snap-shot way. There is, however tenuous, some sense of continuity, and it seemed important for us to establish how this visit to Oscar Williams influenced Plath's life as she made the transition from teaching at Smith to becoming a full-time writer.

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<sup>7</sup> This record is now held in the Sylvia Plath Collection, Mortimer Rare Book Room, Smith College.



PKS: There is a great gap in Plath's *Journals* from the close of her teaching year at Smith on May 22 to June 11, 1959, a twenty day silence: an inauspicious start to the experiment of being a full-time writer. Plath started this entry a few days earlier, on May 19, but got no further than writing "Monday" (*Journals* 386). When Plath breaks her silence by picking up her journal again, she has "much to tell" (392).

It started on Wednesday May 21, when Hughes asked Plath not to attend the performance of *Oedipus* as translated by their friend Paul Roche, in which he was participating, reading the role of Creon. Plath attempted to sneak in to the hall; however, she wrote: "The minute I came in he knew it, and I knew he knew it" (388). The evening was "stale, rancid" (388).

The *Oedipus* reading was not the only uncomfortable incident Plath captured in her journal at this time. Plath remarked that she made a "ceremonial stab" at convincing her husband to meet her after her class so they could "rejoice" at the semester's conclusion (389). However, at the appointed time Hughes was not there. The row that followed Hughes' failure to be waiting for Plath in their car after her last class is almost as well-known as the violent passion that followed their first meeting at Falcon Yard in Cambridge. She is "disabused of many ideals, visions and faiths," he is "a liar, a vain smiler, a twister" (386-387). Throughout this long journal entry, Plath recalled her first impressions of him from the night of February 25, 1956. After the *Oedipus* reading, Hughes wore an "odd, lousy smile" which Plath had not seen "since Falcon Yard" (388). When Plath saw Hughes walking up the path from Paradise Pond with a girl, Hughes had a "broad, intense smile;" it was "open and engaging" it "took on an ugliness in context" (390). Then his smile "became too whitehot, became fatuous, admiration-seeking" and Plath fantasized Hughes transformed as a "black-horned grinning wolf" (390, 391). The pain in Plath's writing makes this journal passage one of the most excruciating to read; it is a palpable hurt. Plath ends bluntly, "So what now" (392).

GC: Twenty days later, Plath reports a violent fight between herself and Hughes ("Air cleared. We are intact"), a total end to her Smith teaching responsibilities and her plans to live in Boston (*Journals* 392). Of interest to myself and Peter was her reporting of "our wearying and also rejuvenating week in New York which cleared out Smith cobwebs" (393). Cross-checking these dates with her letters, we see Plath writing to her mother from Northampton on June 10, 1958: "We were very tired but managed an amazing lot

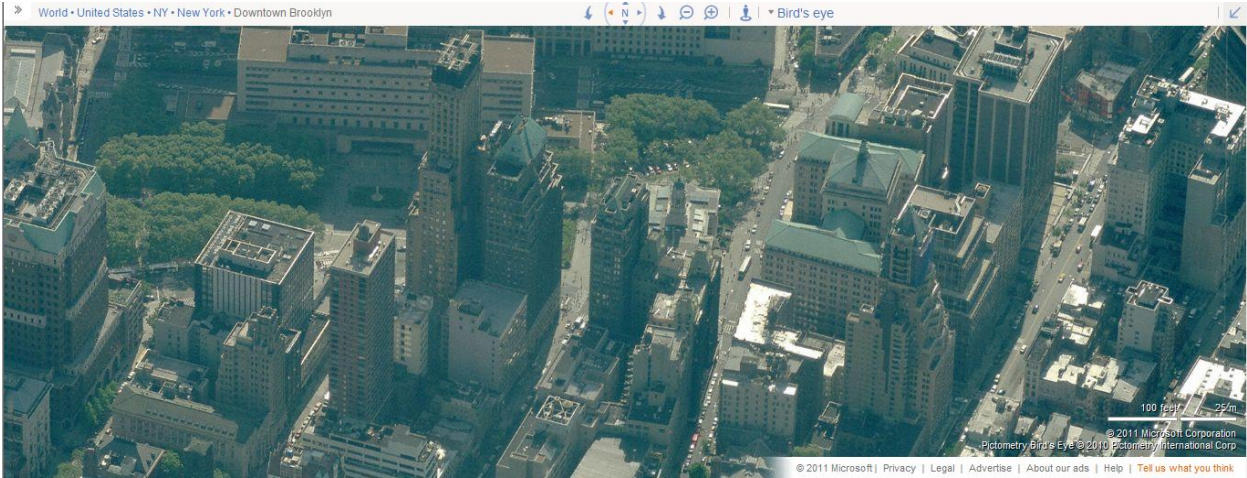


of fun, meetings and walking for miles in our five days [in New York] (*Letters Home* 339). She records meeting with Hughes' publishers, dinner at the Biltmore, two parties, and walking through Central Park, Harlem and taking Hughes to the top of the Empire State Building. It is very likely that one of these parties was held at the apartment of Oscar Williams, since in a more detailed letter to her brother, Warren, Plath writes of drinking Drambuie in a "tiny rooftop studio" (filled with paintings by and photographs of Gene Derwood, Williams' dead wife) and a "fine little tar-roof porch overlooking the gulls and boats" (*Letters Home* 342, 343). As for Williams himself, Plath describes him as "a queer bird-like little man" yet reports "we got along very well" (*Letters Home* 342, 343). Ted Hughes writes to his sister Olwyn that Oscar Williams was "a little bright nice huckster, ¼ Welshman ¾ jew. Dylan T[homas]'s bosom crony" (*Letters of Ted Hughes* 125). He also describes, despite not liking New York ("soot, noise, weariness, cheapjacks and the most pathetic Bohemian district [Greenwich Village])," as an area that he finds interesting – South Ferry, the very tip of the island (124). It is possible this area was explored on the day Plath and Hughes visited Oscar Williams, since as you will see by the photograph to follow, they were pictured very nearby.

PKS: Plath and Hughes visited the home of Oscar Williams at 35 Water Street around June 4, 1958. That particular building no longer stands, having been replaced by a large, modern office tower. Williams regularly hosted literati at his penthouse apartment and as a practice, photographed visiting writer(s). Plath and Hughes were no exception. Above, I described the photographs as they were reported to me. After requesting scans of them from the Lilly Library, I was both very surprised and a little disappointed. The photograph that was listed as being of Williams and Plath was a disappointment, since the female in the photograph was not Sylvia Plath.

The tension that existed between Plath and Hughes at the end of May 1958 really does seem, in the photographs, to have evaporated and, as Gail says above, the "cobwebs" appear to have cleared. We publish below, for the first time, a photograph of Plath and Hughes that few have ever seen. Behind them is Brooklyn, specifically the neighborhood of Brooklyn Heights. The tall buildings in the background are in the Court Street/Cadman Plaza area as can be seen by the Bing map of the area underneath the photograph of Plath and Hughes.







PKS: It is brilliant to see a previously unpublished, rarely seen photograph of Sylvia Plath, especially one in which she is smiling! Another two photographs that the Lilly Library made scans of for me are equally as expressive. One shows Hughes sitting in an Adirondack chair, hands in his lap (right over left), tie twisted about probably by the wind, shirt-sleeves rolled up to his elbows, and a sort of a crooked half-grin. A coiled hose snakes behind him. In the photograph of Plath by herself, she wears a large grin. There is a ghostly impression of a drinking glass in her hands. Her wrist watch, out of focus, might indicate the time is around five in the afternoon. She is seated in a padded deck chair.

GC: There is something ghostly about any photograph. Plath herself noted this in her poem "The Babysitters" when she uses the metaphor "Stopped and awful as a photograph of somebody laughing,/ But ten years dead" (*Collected Poems* 175). There are, of course, fundamental differences in states of photographs. In the image that we look at, are we present when the photograph was taken? Were we the photographer, the photographed or merely an attendant? Were we never there at all? In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes claims photographs can be the object of three distinct practices; to do, to undergo, to look. He calls the photographer, "the operator"; the spectator is all of those who look, and the target, the referent, is the person (or thing) being photographed. Nevertheless for Barthes the photograph fails to capture that elusive something of a person. He delightfully states how his self remains "like a bottle-imp," which refuses to hold still "giggling in my jar" (12).

Photography, for Roland Barthes, is quite simply about death: "Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe. The defeat of time – that is dead, that will die (96).

So there is a curious paradox at play in a photograph. It is something that both (re)animates and returns while at the same time, necessarily, reminds us of loss. What is seemingly gone, suddenly becomes frozen in time. In fact, Susan Sontag claims that "after the event has ended, the picture will still exist, conferring on the event a kind of immortality (and importance) it would never otherwise have enjoyed" (11). Plath and Hughes captured in New York that June are brought back to us via the canvas of the photograph as alive and smiling as if it were yesterday, as if time had never passed at





all.

PKS: Not every archival request is as rewarding, however. A fourth photograph included in this Williams set was of a woman who was misidentified as Plath. My disappointment was severe, and I wrote to the Lilly to let them know that the female subject of the photograph was not Plath.

At this same time, I was corresponding with Jean Rose, the Library Manager of the Random House Group in England, regarding whether or not there were Plath letters in the Heinemann archives. And, yes, they do have some correspondence by and relating to Sylvia Plath. My query related specifically to correspondence about *The Bell Jar*, and whether it would be possible to pin down some of the details of the novels production.<sup>8</sup> Photocopies of her letters were not allowed without the permission of her estate, due, in part, to some of the letters containing financial information. After several emails asking for permission, Faber – on behalf of the estate – denied my request save for one letter.<sup>9</sup> Not interested in flying to England to see one letter, I asked both Faber and Rose if they would permit Gail to see the letter if she was willing to travel to their archive. In the end, the letter – dated January 31, 1962 and addressed to James Michie – turned out not related to *The Bell Jar* at all, but about Heinemann's giving permission for Plath's "Black Rook in Rainy Weather" to be included in a forthcoming Meridian Books anthology.<sup>10</sup>

Hoping to set to rights these let downs, Gail planned a trip to the British Library, and I planned a trip the University of Maryland at College Park, having recently learned of Plath materials being housed there.

GC: Having browsed the online catalogue for The British Library, I decided there were two areas that looked interesting. After my visit last year (recounted in "These Ghostly

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<sup>8</sup> This was an information gathering query for an article I wrote called "Proof of Plath" that was published in the April 2011 issue of *Fine Books & Collections*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>9</sup> I disagree with the Estate denying us – or anyone – access to these letters, though I do understand that an archive can set its own policies. My disagreement stems from the out-dated private, financial information. Whatever the terms of an original contract surely they are null and void, considering at the least that Heinemann lost *The Bell Jar* to Faber. Also, because Plath and Hughes, her original estate manager, are both deceased I question whether or not they have the same rights to privacy that living people have. However, on the other hand, what is important to understand is that additional Plath materials are out there and this leads to the possibility of their one day being accessible. We do appreciate Jean Rose's efforts and patience with us during the enquiry process.

<sup>10</sup> A letter I saw in the Jane Anderson papers at Smith College may reveal the fate of much of the correspondence between Plath and Heinemann of an editorial nature regarding Plath's novel. In this letter dated March 14, 1986, from Roger Smith at Heinemann to Olwyn Hughes, he admits that in a recent move, weeding of their archives took place and may have included records regarding Plath and *The Bell Jar*.



Archives, Redux" *Plath Profiles* 3), I was curious to discover if there were any other original Plath manuscripts held in the material there. The folders that looked promising were related to the Leonard Baskin Papers and the recently acquired Ted Hughes materials.<sup>11</sup> In fact, one online description notes an unpublished Plath poem about Christmas. Having requested the notebook in which this poem was located, I was somewhat excited to sit down at the desk in the large manuscript reading room and open the folder.

As always in this situation, there is a slightly increased heart rate. Just handling this material is such a privilege, but I was also uncertain what I would find. The unpublished poem listed was undated, but the fact that it was contained in a notebook belonging to Hughes at least placed it post-1956. The book itself was quite delicate, the back cover detached. It was a deep wine in colour with "Tudor Duplicate Book 100 sheets in triplicate" printed on the front. Each page was a little musty, and the book felt as though it had not been opened for many years (although clearly this was not the case). Every page was full of astrological charts drawn in Hughes' hand – birth and death charts for people he knew, famous poets and musicians, charts for significant historical events, charts for people who had been diagnosed with cancer and degenerative diseases. There was something very unnerving, very eerie about this collection of charts and swirls and symbols. On page 38 of the book, there were two astrological birth charts for Sylvia Plath, a chart for her first suicide attempt which Hughes places as mid-afternoon on August 24, 1953, and a death chart which he has timed and dated as 11<sup>th</sup> February 1963, 5-7am. There is a birth and death chart for Assia Wevill on page 42 and birth charts for Plath's children Frieda and Nicholas. Yet curiously, almost in the center of the book, amid these circles and symbols and signs, the pages open into a double spread of Plath's own handwriting – that distinctive black ink, the bold lettering and here we see Plath playing with images about Christmas. What struck me immediately was that this was not a serious poem. In fact, if I had to take a guess, I think this could date to the periodic attempts Plath and Hughes made at

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<sup>11</sup> Leonard Baskin (1922-2000) was an American sculptor who taught print making and sculpture at Smith College from 1953 until 1974. It was while Plath was teaching at Smith that she and Hughes became friendly with Baskin and his wife Esther.



entering jingle and advertisement competitions. What Plath was writing seemed like a message from inside a festive greeting card as she toyed with a series of Christmas images – family gatherings, the look on children's faces, plum puddings and the star on the top of the tree. She made five attempts at this, with some of the verses decorated with swirly lines and black stars. While on the one hand it was disappointing not to find an undiscovered, blasting Plath poem unearthed from the depths of the archives, it was delightful to find, in her own hand, doodlings and a more playful Plath, observing how her ideas changed and developed and even with something seemingly so trivial, the odd classic Plath flourish in a description.<sup>12</sup>

PKS: I am more than 3,000 miles away but, like a CCTV network, it feels as though I am with Gail, peering over her shoulder. Original Plath materials are almost like photographs of her. However, instead of capturing her physical likeness at a given moment of time, it captures, physically, her intellectual creativity. Just as Sontag states, "after the event has ended, the picture will still exist, conferring on the event a kind of immortality (and importance) it would never otherwise have enjoyed" (11). I feel the same holds true for both an original Plath work in manuscript, as well as in some way, materials (correspondence/conversations) about her as well.

The Plath-related holdings in the archive at the University of Maryland are in the Frances McCullough Papers. McCullough was Plath's posthumous editor at Harper & Row, the Dial Press and Bantam, and I found out about the collection via a search of Plath archival materials on WorldCat.<sup>13</sup> The papers are largely editorial in nature, including editor's proofs and correspondence regarding some of her major works, including *Letters Home* (1975), *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams* (1979) and *The Journals of Sylvia Plath* (1982). The archivist I dealt with, Beth Alvarez, was very accommodating, given that a virtual barrage of queries began via email. She sent me a preliminary folder list and from that I decided it was best to visit the archive.

I never know what to expect from a new repository. Each has their own policies and procedures to which one must adhere.<sup>14</sup> Some allow photography; some do not. I had only one

<sup>12</sup> Due to copyright reasons, The Estate of Sylvia Plath does not allow any quotations from unpublished materials. This notebook can be found in ADD MS 88918/12/8 4074F.

<sup>13</sup> WorldCat (<http://www.worldcat.org>), is a website where libraries from around the world can list their holdings.

<sup>14</sup> And hours, too. Embarrassingly, I flew from Boston to Baltimore on a 6 a.m. flight to arrive by 9 a.m. at the doors of the Hornbake Library, only to find out that the archive opened at 10.



day there to look through many boxes and folders, so I worked as thoroughly and feverishly as I could. In reviewing editorial materials for *Winter Trees* (1972), I noticed two details that were new to me: first, that an early title for the volume, which was abandoned, was blandly *Late Poems and Three Women: A Poem for Three Voices*; and second, that in the preliminary pages of the U. S. edition of *Winter Trees* there is a "Caution," which is absent from the British edition:

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that the play *Three Women*, being fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States, the British Empire, including the dominion of Canada, and all other countries of the Copyright Union, is subject to royalty. All rights, including professional, amateur, motion picture, recitation, public reading, radio and television broadcasting, and video cassette, are strictly reserved. For information contact Olwyn Hughes, 10 Arkwright Road, Flat B, London N.W. 3, England.

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This makes me feel that the Plath Estate feels that American readers are a bunch of lawless thieves, eager to produce her poems for audiences across the U. S., stealing royalty monies from the Estate. Similarly, it perhaps explains why the American edition of *Ariel* included a "Foreword" by Robert Lowell and for *The Bell Jar*, a "Biographical Note" by Lois Ames; as though in addition to being thieves, Plath's American fans need assistance or instruction in reading works by Plath's.

In her professional papers, McCullough appears to have had access to a wealth of Plath material, though mostly in photocopy. There is voluminous correspondence regarding publications, both those that came to print and those that did not. Of those that did not, perhaps the majority related to a planned book of essays entitled "Recollections of Sylvia Plath," which was to be edited by Lois Ames. Ames at that time had been appointed the official biographer of Sylvia Plath, but failed to produce in both respects. There are also copies of correspondence from Plath to people such as Olive Higgins Prouty and Richard Murphy.

In the McCullough collection, I was particularly interested to see the photographs. It was in this series that my heart almost skipped a beat.

GC: Finding original correspondence in an archive is always exciting, because it is one of those rare opportunities when you get to see an unabridged Plath letter, often with additions in her own hand. At Maryland in the McCullough papers, Peter was exploring copies of letters Plath had written to Olive Higgins Prouty and Richard Murphy. In The



British Library, we had unearthed in the online catalogue that described the Baskin-Hughes correspondence, some original letters and poetry manuscripts of Plath's. As mentioned earlier, often online descriptions can be misleading, so I was prepared to find something quite different. However, rather wonderfully, there in the Baskin-Hughes papers are indeed original letters from Plath.<sup>15</sup> The first is a typed batch of four poems: "Sow," "The Earthenware Head," "Black Rook in Rainy Weather" and "November Graveyard, Haworth."<sup>16</sup> The first page of "Sow" has Plath's 337 Elm Street, Northampton address typed in the top right hand corner of the page and on the top left, in her own black inked handwriting is written "For Esther and Leonard/May 24 1958/Sylvia Plath." It is the minutiae that fascinate me with documents like this. For example, the "F" of the "For" is not in Plath's usual hand, but rather more elaborate, as though she were making an effort to make the manuscript decorative. Yet the words "For Esther" are, rather endearingly, smudged upwards, as though she brushed the ink a little too soon after writing. Such small details for me in an archive really re-animate Plath, somehow making her more human and real. For Elizabeth Hallam and Jenny Hockey, it is the durability of these cultural artefacts that bring the dead back to us: "Material culture mediates our relationship with death and the dead; objects, images and practices, as well as places and spaces, call to mind or are made to remind us of the deaths of others. Material objects invoke the dead" (2). These letters and manuscripts tell us that Plath typed this, her hands have touched it, used it, created it. In other words, she can be invoked. Her things remind us of her death and help to bring her back.

Further in the same folder is a beige-grey cardboard folder with "The Grecourt Review" printed on the front, and inside is a copy of "Sculptor," the poem Plath dedicated to Leonard Baskin after visiting his studio.<sup>17</sup> On the inner leaf of the folder, again in Plath's hand, she has written: "For Esther and Leonard/July 7 1959/With

<sup>15</sup> These can be found in the following folder: ADD MS 83687 3024A

<sup>16</sup> It is worth noting that this final poem is mistakenly described by Ted Hughes in *Collected Poems* as being about Heptonstall Churchyard. Evidently at some point, Plath removed "Haworth" from the title.

<sup>17</sup> This would have been an offprint, likely specifically produced as a contributor copy for Plath to distribute or possibly to keep for her own papers. The rare book market value of "Sculptor" is through the roof, with two copies currently for sale for \$3,500 and \$4,228.97 (£2,195.07 and £2,500), respectively.



love/Sylvia."<sup>18</sup> This is one of the earlier examples of how certain people and places influenced Plath's writing, how a visual image of an artist's studio, taken in by the eye became transformed into a textual play of words. But Plath was also sensitive to other locations in which she lived and visited. Consider the places that appear in her writing: Winthrop, Yaddo, Yorkshire, Cambridge, even the wallpaper in her Chalcot Square flat. But in her later *Ariel* poems, it is Devon that features heavily: her bees, her apple orchard and the elms on her ancient Roman mound situated in the garden at Court Green.

PKS: There are a few photographs of Plath or related sites in the McCullough papers. A couple were taken by Gordon Lameyer, her boyfriend from 1953-1954, and were used to illustrate his unpublished manuscript, "Who is Sylvia?"<sup>19</sup> But the photograph to which I referred to earlier – the one which made my heart jump – is a scenic view of Court Green:



<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, there is also an identical folder, this time containing a poem by Ted Hughes: "Roosting Hawk" and in Hughes' hand: "For Esther and Leonard/love Ted" also located in ADD MS 83687 3024A.

<sup>19</sup> Indiana University holds an unpublished Lameyer manuscript entitled "Dear Sylvia." This is a similar manuscript to "Who is Sylvia?" and includes Lameyer's letters to Plath. Also with this archive, in the Lameyer Mss. are photographs and color slides of Lameyer and Plath. See <http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/guides/plath/lameyer.shtml> for more information.



Above we see Court Green from circa June 1972, likely from the perspective near the "wall of old corpses" Plath writes about in her poem "Letter in November" (253). The photograph was taken by Frances McCullough's husband, David Willis McCullough, and it is one of three of the Court Green and its property. What is worth pointing out are the grouping of trees in the top right of the image. As Plath writes in the poem named for these very Wych elm trees: "What is this...in its strangle of branches?" (*Collected Poems* 193).

Just as a Plath manuscript can re-vivify the writer, so too can an image such as this, which calls to mind the inspiration to one of Plath's most famous poems. In a letter written to her mother on January 18, 1962, after the birth of her son Nicholas, in language she would mirror in her poem "Elm," Plath writes of "a full moon tonight in our huge elm" (*Letters Home* 443). The branches are indeed a "snaky" "hand of wires," and one can indeed imagine the "caught" rising moon (193, 192). The elm is featured in two additional spring 1962 poems, "Pheasant" and "Three Women." In "Three Women," the first voice complacently remarks "Dawn flowers in the great elm outside the house" and in "Pheasant," the very bird "Settles in the elm, and is easy" in spite of its being marked for death (*Collected Poems* 185, 191).

The trees are gone, killed in the 1970s most likely by Dutch Elm disease which began to affect elm trees in England after 1967.<sup>20</sup> The elms figure in a two additional photographs held in the McCullough papers.<sup>21</sup> One is below, and is a portrait-oriented photograph of the elms. The third photograph in which the elms appear also may have captured a branch of the laburnum. Plath included an image of the laburnum in two of her fall 1962 poems. In "The Arrival of the Bee Box" the speaker muses "I wonder if they would forget me / If I just undid the locks and stood back and turned into a tree. / There is the laburnum, its blond colonnades" and in "Letter in November": "The streetlight / Splits through the rat's-tail / Pods of the laburnum at nine in the morning" (213, 253). Hughes wrote a poem entitled "The Laburnum," which begins: "Tell me / We shall sit together this summer / Under the laburnum" (Hughes, *Collected Poems* 1176). The poem hints at the significance of this tree to the couple from their one spring under its "blond colonnades" in 1962.

Now, below, are the elms.

<sup>20</sup> For more on this, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch\\_elm\\_disease#Europe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch_elm_disease#Europe).

<sup>21</sup> The photographs are in box 13 of the McCullough Papers.







It is the first opportunity in a generation, perhaps, to see these trees. It places or grounds "Elm" in a similar way that Plath's "The Moon and the Yew Tree" and "Letter and November" locate the view west from Court Green's windows. However, to place the elms in our readers minds when considering the layout of Court Green, we turn to a Google satellite image which has been touched up in Photoshop with a shakily drawn outlines to indicate where the elm trees (white) were and where the yew tree is (blue) in relation to the house.



GC: In conversation with Plath's friend, Elizabeth Sigmund, we were able to determine that the position of the elm trees also held another significance, in that they were atop the Roman mound which Plath writes so eloquently about in her letters (see *Letters Home* 452).<sup>22</sup> This was also confirmed by Anne Stevenson in *Bitter Fame*, when she describes the location of the elms as "shouldering" the roman mound" (222). Thus the elm photograph that we see from 1972 does that wonderful thing that photographs often do, which is to give us just as much on the periphery as the main *punctum* of the image. The second special "peripheral" to be captured – if you look carefully again at the elm image above– is Plath's old car parked directly beneath the trees. Hughes kept this car

<sup>22</sup> On page 452 of *Letters Home*, Plath writes from Court Green in Devon: "We even had an antiquarian come to visit our Ancient Mound last Sunday!"





for many years until it literally fell apart and here we are able to see the Morris Traveller that Plath drove around those Devonshire lanes. Although the image is black and white, and does not capture the whole car, Elizabeth Sigmund informed me that Plath's car was all



black (Elizabeth herself had a dark green version). In fact, Elizabeth owns a small model of Plath's car bought because it was an exact replica.

And so this image discovered in the McCullough papers offers us so much more than it would initially seem on the surface. Susan Sontag describes this "giving" nature of photographs as thus - that a photograph is not only an interpretation of the real, "it is also a trace, something directly stencilled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask" (154). In this case, we again see, as we have so many times before, how the archives give up their ghostly remains.

The archives of Sylvia Plath, though perused by hundreds – if not thousands – of scholars over the last thirty or so years, continue to challenge their users to dig deep, like the "miner" of "Nick and the Candlestick" (*Collected Poems* 240). We hope this paper has shown that through a combination of internet querying, in-person research, and the kind selflessness of librarians and archivists, that new Plath material – photographs, poetry, correspondence, etc. – can indeed be found and can contribute to our still growing understanding of Plath's life and work. Also, through new collections such as the McCullough Papers and the much anticipated Olwyn Hughes material recently purchased by The British Library, the editorial and posthumous works will begin to unravel, and the "other side" of Plath studies can begin to be studied.



We never know what we will truly find in an archive, no matter how many visits. And, perhaps it is with fresh eyes, that new materials will be found. This paper concludes with the hope that such a thing will come true, as Peter plans a return trip to Smith College and to other newly learned-of archives and Gail prepares to sail to America for her very first visit...



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